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E X D I S

BANGKOK PLEASE PASS TO CODEL HART

1. YESTERDAY SENATOR HART, MR. LOWENSTEIN AND AMBASSADOR LOCKE CALLED UPON CHIEF OF STATE, GENERAL THIEU. THIEU MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

A. THAT A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO AROUSE THE PEOPLE FROM THEIR PRESENT INDIFFERENCE TO A SPIRIT OF ACTIVE COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

B. THAT CLEAN ELECTIONS ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO MAKE THE PEOPLE FEEL THEY HAVE DEMOCRACY, AND THAT HE BELIEVES THE ELECTION WILL BE CLEAN. THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ARE SUSPICIOUS BY NATURE, AND IF THERE IS MANIPULATION, THEY WILL KNOW IT.

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C. THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL TO KEEP THE ARMY OUT OF POLITICS, AND HE HOPES GEN. VIEN, HEAD OF THE ARMY, CAN STICK TO HIS DECLARATION TO THIS EFFECT. HE BELIEVES HE CAN.

D. THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO GET ALL THE FACTIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE TO FORM A UNITED NON-COMMUNIST POLITICAL FRONT, SO AS TO DEVELOP A POLITICAL BASE CAPABLE OF PREVENTING THE VIET CONG FROM ACHIEVING A POLITICAL VICTORY AFTER LOSING MILITARILY.

E. THAT THERE IS INSUFFICIENT POLITICAL BASE AT THE MOMENT TO PREVENT THE VIET CONG FROM WINNING IN A POLITICAL CONTEST BECAUSE OF THEIR STRONG, DISCIPLINED POLITICAL BASE. THE VC CADRES IN THE VILLAGES ARE MORE IMPORTANT TO THEM THAN THEIR BATTALIONS.

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F. THAT VC COMING OVER TO THE GOVERNMENT IN HOI CHANH MAY PHYSICALLY CHANGE THEIR ALLEGIANCE, BUT MAY NOT HAVE "CHANGED THEIR MINDS" ABOUT COMMUNIST DOCTRINE, AND THEREFORE MAY NOT BE RELIABLE IN POLITICAL STRUGGLE.

G. THAT HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT (ONCE EXPRESSED AS "WHEN I RUN" AND ONCE AS "IF I RUN") WILL NOT SPLIT THE ARMY. THAT HE DOES NOT EXPECT TO WIN, BUT IT IS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.

2. IT IS AMBASSADOR LOCKE'S IMPRESSION FROM THE MEETING THAT

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THIEU HAS NOT YET FULLY MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT; THAT HIS STATEMENT ABOUT KNOWING HE WILL LOSE IS MADE PRIMARILY AS A FACE-SAVER IF HE LOSES; THAT HE IS CURRENTLY TRYING TO LINE UP VARIOUS FACTIONS SUCH AS HOA HAO, CAO DAI, CATHOLICS, ETC., TO FORM THE "UNITED POLITICAL FRONT" THAT HE ENVISAGES BEHIND HIM(ALSO CONFIRMED BY OTHER SOURCES); THAT HE WILL PROBABLY RUN IF HE BELIEVES HE HAS LINED UP THE "UNITED FRONT" AND CAN WIN, OR IF HE BELIEVES HIS RUNNING IS NECESSARY TO PREVENT MISUSE OF THE ARMY BY KY IN THE ELECTION, BUT THAT IF NEITHER OF THESE CONDITIONS PREVAIL HE MAY NOT RUN. NOT HINTED IN THIS CONVERSATION, BUT ROM OTHER REPORTS, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THIEU WILL RUN IF HE CONCLUDES THAT BY DOING SO HE CAN CAUSE KY TO LOSE; FORMER CABLES INDICATE HIS BITTERNESS AND THE REASONS THEREFORE. BUNKER
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